

Washington, DC – Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04) today introduced the Global Food Security Act of 2009 (H.R. 3077) with Representatives Donald Payne, Jo Ann Emerson, and others, calling for a coordinated and comprehensive U.S. global food security strategy that leverages bilateral and multilateral investments and creates partnerships with the private sector, NGOs, and universities. A Government Accountability Office 2008 report found that defeating chronic hunger will take a major new effort in global agriculture. While 20% of U.S. foreign assistance was going to global agriculture in the 1980s, the U.S. will invest only 3% this year.

“Agricultural productivity and rural infrastructure needs to once again be a priority for American foreign policy. Global hunger is a moral issue and a security problem too big to ignore. It undermines U.S. foreign assistance investments and threatens the political and social stability of vulnerable countries. My bill makes bold and innovative investments to strengthen the lives of the world’s poorest families,” said Congresswoman McCollum.

Nearly 1 billion people worldwide suffer from food insecurity. Over 3.5 million mothers and children will die from chronic hunger each year. President Barack Obama announced his goal to double U.S. assistance for global agricultural productivity and rural development in April 2009 and called for a comprehensive strategy to alleviate hunger. U.S. Senators Richard Lugar and Robert Casey earlier this year, introduced the Global Food Security Act (S.384), the companion to Congresswoman McCollum’s bill.

“Having Senators Lugar and Casey as partners in this effort is a tremendous opportunity to work together in a bipartisan manner to address the terrible injustice of chronic hunger. Today, the U.S. is running from one famine to the next, trying to solve the crisis with emergency aid. But humanitarian aid tools alone won’t fix long-term development problems. The solution is simple but not easy - increase the productivity of small farmers and improve the rural infrastructure that supports agriculture. This bill invests in agricultural development to give families more to eat, raise their incomes, and break dependence on emergency food aid. It’s time to renew America’s commitment to global agriculture with a green revolution for the 21st century,” said Congresswoman McCollum.

The Global Food Security Act is a direct response to the need for a stronger U.S. commitment. The measure seeks to engage U.S. universities as partners in agricultural research activities in developing countries through a new program called HECTARE, establish a White House coordinator for global food security, create an Emergency Rapid Response to Food Crises Fund at USAID to allow faster and more targeted emergency assistance, and authorize funding for programs, starting at \$1 billion in FY10 and rising to \$2.5 billion in FY14.

Public and private partnerships are important vehicles to achieve the objectives of the legislation. The private sector, NGOs and American universities continue to serve as key engines of development with the capability to cooperate with international agencies and institutions in other countries to promote better management of agricultural and natural resources.

"We are grateful for Rep. McCollum's leadership on this legislation, which reinforces the importance of investing in higher education to address critical and chronic food security issues. The University of Minnesota has a strong tradition of partnering to build food security and capacity in developing countries, and we believe that the partnerships supported in this bill will allow for the training and development of a new generation of agricultural and food professionals across the developing world," said Allen S. Levine, Dean, College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences, University of Minnesota.

"We are especially grateful for provisions included in the bill that authorize higher funding for agriculture, nutrition and rural development under section 103 of the Foreign Assistance Act. We also appreciate assurances in the bill that agriculture development and related assistance will be made available through private voluntary organizations and cooperatives (such as Land O'Lakes) that have the ability to improve the productivity, incomes and nutrition of poor, rural populations," said Tom Verdoorn, Vice President, International Development, Land O'Lakes, Inc.

"InterAction applauds Rep. McCollum's leadership in promoting global food security with the introduction of the Global Food Security Act. Its introduction, along with the Lugar-Casey Act in the U.S. Senate and President Obama's food security initiative, reflects a welcome shift in priorities. Reversing decades of disinvestment in agricultural development, these measures together signal an understanding that appropriate investments in agricultural development will not only reduce hunger but stimulate rural economic growth and greater self-sufficiency," said Samuel A. Worthington, President & CEO of InterAction.

"Women farmers produce a majority of the food in developing countries – despite limited access to credit, information, land, tools and technology. With the appropriate investments, women can be key economic agents of change in their roles as farmers, entrepreneurs and wage laborers. Moreover, when women can generate income through agriculture, they are

more likely to spend it on improving their families' nutrition, health and education. The Global Food Security Act recognizes this and calls for a strategy that will "prioritize and support the central role of women" in efforts to make U.S. agricultural development initiatives more effective. ICRW commends Rep. McCollum for seizing this opportunity to invest in women farmers and harvest the pay-offs of improved food security and boosted agricultural economic growth to reduce poverty and hunger," said Dr. Geeta Rao Gupta, president, International Center for Research on Women.

"Last year's food crisis is not over for the one billion poor people across the world who suffer from hunger. In many countries food prices remain high and the economic crisis is expected to drive an additional 100 million people in absolute poverty. Ironically, as the economy begins to recover, commodity and energy prices that have declined during the economic crisis will likely skyrocket again. The McCollum Global Food Security Act of 2009 seeks to address the current humanitarian crisis as well as the underlying causes of hunger by investing in developing country agriculture and market access while conserving natural resources. Successful local sustainable agriculture is not only about avoiding food insecurity – it is a central part of building community resilience to poverty, climate change and conflict. Oxfam commends Representative McCollum's efforts to undertake long-term, sustainable, appropriate, and comprehensive solutions to food insecurity in the poorest nations of the world. Congress must take action now," said Raymond C. Offenheiser, President of Oxfam America.

"The Global Food Security Act of 2009 provides the long-overdue opportunity for reshaping US efforts to help the most threatened part of humanity achieve food security by ensuring such a strategy fully integrates adaptation to climate change, provision of ecosystem services, and conservation agriculture," said David Reed, Senior Vice President of Policy for the World Wildlife Fund.

"Today nearly one billion people lack access to sufficient food for an active and healthy life.

Food for the Hungry, motivated by God's heart for the poor and the desire to see each person reach their God-given potential is committed to alleviating hunger and poverty worldwide. Representative McCollum's Global Food Security Act takes an important step in that direction by focusing US assistance on the rural farmers, with particular focus on women who produce up to 80% of the food produced in sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally this bill provides appropriate linkages to child survival and maternal health as well as HIV/AIDS programming allowing for a more comprehensive strategy of fighting hunger and poverty. Finally, McCollum's bill emphasizes working in partnership with private voluntary organizations like Food for the Hungry, World Vision, Catholic Relief Services and others which have particular experience, networks and well established, long-term relationships with the rural poor in order to develop sustainable and appropriate programs. We urge both parties in Congress to support this legislation which is not only the right and compassionate response but also provides greater national security to the US by alleviating hunger and poverty two prime drivers of extremism worldwide," said Benjamin K. Homan, President & Chief Executive Officer, Food for the Hungry, Phoenix, Arizona.

"The members of the Alliance for Global Food Security are private voluntary organizations and cooperatives that are active in humanitarian and development efforts in over 100 countries. Hard hit by the food and economic crises of the past two years, the number of hungry people worldwide has increased by nearly 200 million. Short-term emergency aid for the neediest has been a life saver, but is not enough to turn this trend around. Therefore, we have high praise for this legislation and urge congressional action as soon as possible. It tackles the world hunger problem head-on by focusing more resources on improving agriculture production, rural infrastructure and nutrition in low-income, developing countries. Most important, it modifies current law to assure that poor populations directly benefit from these efforts through programs conducted by non-governmental organizations that link rural villages to markets and services and help these communities establish viable agricultural and business enterprises," said Ellen Levinson, Executive Director, Alliance for Global Food Security.

Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-4) serves on the House Appropriations & Budget Committees.

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